

COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

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In the memorable Act, which may be called the written constitution of England, passed in the first year of the reign of William and Mary, and entitled "an Act declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject, and settling the Succession of the Crown," it is declared, "THAT THE ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OUGHT TO BE FREE."

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SUMMARY OF POLITICS.

WESTMINSTER ELECTION.—Whatever some men might think of the politics of Sir Francis Burdett; however the public might be divided in their wishes as to the result of the election, however divided in their feelings as to the success of the efforts of the persons who proposed Sir Francis; still, as to the *manner* of conducting the election, from the opening to the close, there was but one sentiment, and that was, that it was an instance of obedience to the constitution, which had not been witnessed for many years past, and which, if independence of mind and public spirit were not extinct in England, must become an example to the electors of other places and districts. "This is, indeed, an instance of strict observance of the law; this is, indeed, the practice of the English constitution; this is, indeed, a free election; and, if all members were thus elected, we should hear no more of that jobbing, which is now the disgrace and the curse of the country." Except amongst the mere venal; except amongst those who will approve of nothing that does not favour their views of plunder; except amongst those, to whom no one can have the face to deny the title of public robber, this was the universal sentiment, relative to the whole of those memorable transactions, which led to the seating of Sir Francis Burdett in the House of Commons, as one of the members for the city and liberties of Westminster.—It was, therefore, not without a good deal of surprize, that the public saw an attempt made, by the High Bailiff of Westminster, to make the member, so elected, and who had never been what is called a *candidate*, who had never even *offered* himself for the suffrages of the electors, *pay* for his election. This person applied to Sir Francis for what he termed his *share* of the expences of erecting hustings, keeping poll-books, dinners for himself and assistants, and many other things too numerous to mention, amounting to a sum, which, if the demand had been acquiesced in, would have gone nearly to ruin

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a man, who had had no more than his three hundred pounds a year (the income necessary for qualification), and who had had a family to maintain; so that, supposing such a demand to be legal, the law would, in fact, have ordained a punishment, and a most cruel punishment too, for an obedience to the law itself. We have so long been accustomed to look upon seats in parliament as a benefit to the holder; we have so long seen men struggle for this sort of possession with more eagerness and at greater risk than they struggle for almost any other sort of possession; we have, for so long time, been accustomed to see seats in the House of Commons openly offered for sale, by public advertisement, and offers to purchase, made in the like public manner; our minds have been so long familiarized to this set of ideas, that it appears, at last, to have become a settled notion, that a seat in the House of Commons is a valuable acquisition, and, of course, that the possessor, or occupier, *ought to pay for it*. But, all this is in direct hostility to the letter as well as the spirit of those statutes and those usages, which constitute what is called, *the constitution* of England, according to which a seat in the House of Commons is *no benefit*, but exacts from the person placed in it, certain *duties* which he is *obliged*, under heavy penalties, to perform; and, therefore, a man, according to the English constitution, can no more be compelled to pay the expences attending his election to serve as member of parliament (provided he does not, by his own act, agree for such payment), any more than he can be compelled to pay the expences, which may attend his being elected to serve as constable or tythingman or churchwarden or even as juryman. There is, preparatory to an election, a *writ*, or *command*, issued by the king, to the electors of such a place, or district, to elect one or more members to *serve* in parliament. When this command is fulfilled, another command is issued to, and served upon, the person or persons elected, who are, in this second writ, *commanded* to give their personal attendance in the Parliament

House; and, the law is, that the place for which a man is chosen, shall *pay him*, at a certain rate, for his attendance. All this concurs in the notion, that a seat in parliament imposes a burthensome duty, instead of being a possession of emolument. If the person chosen, refuse to give his attendance, in obedience to the writ; or, if he neglect to attend, no matter from what motive, he is liable to be punished, even to *fine and imprisonment*. Where, then, can be the justice in making a man *pay* for being elected, unless he has made, of himself, or by his authority, some compact to that effect?—Having thus opened the subject, which is one that will, I trust, receive a full discussion amongst *the people*, at least, I shall now insert what was said relating to it, in the House of Commons, on the 11th instant, as I find it reported in the *Courier* newspaper of the 12th. —“SIR FRANCIS BURDETT had waited till he saw the house in a sufficient state of attendance, before he stated how he was circumstanced with respect to a transaction, which in his view of it involved a breach of the privileges of that house. It would be necessary for him, in order to explain the situation in which he stood, to state to the house a transaction which had taken place in one of the courts below. It was well known, that at the last election for the city of Westminster, the electors had nominated him as one of the candidates without his knowing any thing of the fact; and it was only towards the close of the election, he was made acquainted with it. The electors claimed to be exempt from paying any part of the expense of that election, and the High Bailiff of Westminster had brought an action against him as one of the candidates, to recover a proportion of the expense of taking the election. Though there was no law to authorise such a demand, nor any custom to sanction the practice, though it was well known that he had not taken any share or portion in the conduct or direction of that election, yet, without any proof of the existence of law or custom to sanction the demand, the learned judge in the court below had thought proper to direct the jury to find a verdict against him, *merely because he had taken his seat*. This was the reason delivered by that learned judge to the jury, why he had incurred the expenses for which the action was brought. Now, as to his taking his seat, that was not voluntary on his part, as he had done it in compliance with the writ, and any individual who may be

elected, was compellable to attend and do his duty in that house. Yet the learned judge had held that the circumstance of his having taken his seat had rendered him liable to expenses incurred in taking the election. He was yet to learn *what benefit it was to an individual to sit in that house, if he came there to discharge his duty with integrity*: and he was therefore surprised to hear any learned judge say, according to the law, as it is at present, that a seat in that house was any other than a burthen upon the individual elected to that situation. He was not, however, surprised to find that learned judge consider a seat in that house a benefit, as it was a stepping-stone to the bench. But he had not expected that a judge upon the bench would lay it down, that an individual for yielding obedience to the writ, had incurred a penalty for doing what, if he had not done, would have made him liable to the censure of that house. A person who had a duty imposed on him ought to be suffered to do it *without impediment*: but this was an involuntary act upon his part, and ought not, according to any constitutional law, and he hoped that all such law was not altogether forgotten, to subject him to any such penalty. It was said in Lord Raymond's Reports, that judges did not understand the laws of parliament. The matter was of small moment to him, it was even an object of perfect indifference, but it was of material importance to the Electors of Westminster, and to the privileges of that house. He did not make it a subject of complaint. What he mentioned the transaction for was, to know *whether he was to comply with the demand that would be made upon him, in consequence of the decision of the court below*. He applied but for the advice of the house, in order, that, by his silently submitting to that decision, the privilege of that house should not suffer any breach in his person.” —“THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER did not know how to address the house on this occasion; indeed, he felt he should apologize for offering himself, as there was no motion before them. He trusted, however, that the house would allow him to state what occurred to him in the view he at present had of the case; and from every attention that he could give to the statement of the honourable baronet, it did not appear to him to be a case in which the house could interfere. If the hon. baronet was right in his conception of the law, respecting

" the misdirection of the learned judge, he
 " had been very ill advised by his counsel,
 " not to apply for a review of the whole
 " case, *by a motion for a new trial, or by a*
 " *bill of exceptions.* As he apprehended
 " the case, the action had been brought
 " against the hon. baronet for the use which
 " he or his agents had made of certain
 " erections for hustings, and the facts went
 " to be decided upon to a jury. The direc-
 " tion of a judge *might be right or might be*
 " *wrong*, but in either case that house was
 " not the proper tribunal in which to have
 " the proceedings of the court below re-
 " viewed. The course of practice in the
 " administration of law, was in such cases
 " either to proceed by motion to the court
 " out of which the record issued for a new
 " trial, or by a bill of exceptions; and if ei-
 " ther of these had been resorted to by the
 " hon. baronet and not been successful,
 " *there would be no relief for him.* It was
 " not for him to say whether or not the di-
 " rection of the learned judge was correct;
 " but the jury had no doubt decided upon the
 " evidence produced to them of the use made
 " of the erections by the agents of the hon.
 " baronet. That was his view of the subject;
 " but it would remain for the hon. baronet
 " to decide what course he should pursue
 " to attain any object he may have in con-
 " templation."—"MR. CURWEN vindicated
 " the learned judge from the imputation of
 " having obtained his present exalted station
 " by any party services, and contended that
 " his elevation was altogether owing to his
 " transcendent talents; as an abler or more
 " upright judge had never sat upon the
 " bench."—"THE SPEAKER did not know
 " that he was not bound, upon an applica-
 " tion of this description to the house, to
 " state what occurred to him upon the
 " subject. Undoubtedly, as he understood
 " the matter, the hon. member had offered
 " himself to the house with *perfect regula-*
 " *rity*, on a transaction which appeared to
 " him to amount to a breach of their privi-
 " leges. The hon. baronet in taking this
 " course *had done his duty*, and it was a
 " grave question he had submitted to their
 " consideration, so far as it regarded a breach
 " of the privileges of that house, and affect-
 " ed the character of an eminent person in
 " a high judicial office. If he (the Speak-
 " er) had had *any notice* of such an applica-
 " tion; if he had but the slightest intima-
 " tion of the intention of the hon. baronet,
 " he would have endeavoured to be better
 " prepared to satisfy his inquiry. At pre-
 " sent he had to apologise to the house, if
 " he should not be able to give that satisfac-

" tion which on such a question was to be
 " desired. The house could not be pre-
 " pared in this instance to give advice to the
 " hon. baronet. What he would recom-
 " mend was, that he should wait, till *some*
 " *practical consequence* should result from
 " the decision of the court below, and if he
 " should conceive that consequence to be a
 " breach of the privilege of the house, he
 " could not too soon bring it under the view
 " of the house, nor could the house too
 " soon proceed to take it into consideration."
 " —After a few words from Sir F. Bur-
 " dett, disclaiming the having brought the
 " question forward *as a complaint*, his ob-
 " ject having been to obtain *advice* from
 " the house, the matter was allowed to rest
 " there."—And there, I think, it will
 " rest for a long time; for, I am persuaded,
 " that the good sense of the High Bailiff of
 " Westminster, joined, as it doubtless will be,
 " by the advice of judicious friends, will not
 " suffer him to push his demand to a seizure of
 " goods and chattels.—If the shape and
 " manner, in which Sir Francis brought this
 " subject forward were conspicuously judi-
 " cious, the speech of the Speaker was not less
 " so. He seems to have done precisely as
 " much as he ought to have done, and not a
 " tittle too much. The mere *decision* of the
 " court below was not enough for the House
 " to act upon: there wanted the carrying of
 " that decision into effect, in order to enable
 " the House to come to some determination as
 " to the remedy. To *punish* a member for
 " having *yielded obedience to the law* which
 " compels him to take his seat, would certainly
 " be a matter fit for parliamentary discussion
 " and decision; but, the punishment cannot
 " be said to be inflicted, in this case, until Sir
 " Francis has been actually forced to pay the
 " money, or until it has been taken from him,
 " in his goods and chattels. Until that hap-
 " pens, he has experienced no punishment;
 " for, as to the expenses of defending the ac-
 " tion, supposing them to have been incurred
 " and defrayed by him (which is not, I be-
 " lieve, the case), it was his own voluntary act.
 " But, foreseeing what was likely to take
 " place; foreseeing, that, in the regular course
 " of legal proceedings, he should be soon call-
 " ed upon to pay the amount of the sum ad-
 " judged against him, it certainly became him
 " to apply to the House for *advice* as to the
 " manner in which he should act, when the
 " call was made upon him for the money, see-
 " ing that the House, in its watchfulness over
 " its honour and purity, might punish him for
 " having done a thing, which would argue,
 " that it was utterly impossible to take a seat
 " therein, without the aid of the ready mo-

ney.—Mr. Perceval says, that a *new trial* should have been applied for; and, that, if that were refused, "*there would be no relief.*" A new trial has been applied for, and refused; or, at least, so I have read in the newspapers; and, of course, according to Mr. Perceval's opinion, Sir Francis, and every other man in his situation, has no relief; and, every man, upon whom the electors of any place may think proper to impose the duty of representing them in parliament, is *certain* to incur a punishment. If he refuse obedience to the king's command to attend in parliament, the House will punish him, and *must* punish him, if they do their duty, and they may punish him by both *fine* and *imprisonment*, and continue to do so repeatedly, until he does obey the king's command. If, on the other hand, he obey the command, the returning officer punishes him by making him pay a bill of expenses; for, observe, that, if Sir Francis's statement be correct, the merely taking the seat, that is to say, the obeying of the king's command, is, of itself, to be considered as proof, that he owes the amount of those expenses. Nay, he may, if this be law, be punished *both ways*. First, for having disobeyed the king's command, and, then, the moment he does obey it, for having obeyed it.—I shall be told, may be, that the House would not, in fact, have been thus severe; and, that the persons, who generally therein agitate questions, would have scorned to utter a word of complaint against Sir Francis, if he had not entered the House till doomsday. This may, possibly, be true enough; but, then, what would become of the representation of Westminster? "Oh!" exclaim a thousand eager voices, "I would, with all my soul have supplied his place, and would have paid the High Bailiff, dinners and all, without saying one single word about the matter." I believe, gentlemen, that, for once in your lives, you speak the truth. But, there is still a difficulty; for, how will you find the means of convincing the electors of Westminster, that you will not, or would not, if in your power, endeavour, nay take care, to *lick yourselves whole again*? When I was at Hoxton, the electors of that place told me, in plain English, that a member, who pledged himself to take nothing from the government, did not suit them; for that, they knew too much of mankind to suppose, that, except in very peculiar cases, men would expend their money without a reliance upon a reimbursement, and even upon a profitable return; "which," said they, "is verified in your conduct; for you will not ex-

pend a penny to moisten a poor man's lips "this hot weather." I endeavoured to shew them, that whatever they received, in this way, they were, in the end, compelled to refund with more than Jew-like interest. For that, the amount of the candidate's reimbursement exceeding his expenditure, it followed, upon their own principles, that the people must be the loser. "For instance," said I, "the gentleman, to whom you are now going to give your votes, will receive, in consequence of your suffrages, £3,000 a year. That, in four years, amounts to £12,000, and, according to your own statement, he purchases your votes, or rather, to soften the thing, he gives you, after you have voted, about £2,000. So that, you must be the losers by the amount of £10,000 at every election." "No," answered they; "for the £12,000 is divided amongst all the nation, and the £2,000 amongst only about 400 of us." "But," replied I, "if the electors of every other place act upon your principle, then you must bear a share of the loss sustained upon the whole." "Aye," rejoined they, "but there are but few electors in the whole; and, therefore, however the whole nation may lose, we, who have the voting for members of parliament, gain." "So, then," concluded I, "the advantage is reserved solely for those who are ready to perjure themselves; this, according to you, is the birth-right of Englishmen; that there are amongst them, some who are ready to take bribes and false oaths, and that the rest of the people are to be taxed by them, and for their advantage." Being thus penned up, they told me, that I was a methodist parson, and that I might go and preach to the devil; for that they should remain staunch to their religion, and their parson, who, in fact, was one of the most violent clamourers for my opponent.—Very different are the principles, by which I know the electors of Westminster, or, at least, a great majority of them, to be actuated. They want no pay for voting: they do not desire to thrive by the distresses and miseries of the nation at large; they desire representatives, who will seek no emolument from the national purse; and, of course, they desire that those representatives should be loaded with no burthen but merely that of the duties imposed upon them.—Surely, nothing was ever more reasonable than this; nothing, considering the general state of the representation, more praise-worthy; yet have the beastly hirelings of the press not failed

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to give to this proceeding, on the part of Sir Francis Burdett, the character of *faction*. Of faction! What, is it factious to maintain, or to endeavour to maintain, the undeniable principles of that constitution, for the preservation of which we are called upon to spend our "last shilling, and to shed our last drop of blood?" Not a day passes over our heads but we are reminded of the excellence of this constitution, and of the shame and infamy and misery which would speedily follow its destruction. Agreed! Perfectly agreed! And what does Sir Francis Burdett ask, but the *practice* of this very constitution; being, doubtless, of fixed opinion, that, if laws are not observed, they are, in fact, destroyed, as to all their good purposes, and that they insensibly become instruments of deception and oppression; that they cast forth darkness and misery, instead of light and happiness?—It being evident, that, generally speaking, men pursue first their private interests, it follows, that, if men expend money for the purpose of obtaining seats in parliament, they have it in view to get a large profit by such expenditure, and will, of course, use the means of securing such profit. The *kind* of profit may differ. Some may prefer baubles to hard solid cash; but, the effect, as to the nation, will be pretty nearly the same, in the end. And, this being the case, it is quite clear, that whoever wishes to see a corrupt House of Commons, will surely be an advocate for *expensive* elections.

—One thing surprized me not a little, and that was, that the *Whigs*, the famous advocates for PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, did not say one word, when Sir Francis called upon the whole House for advice. They had, formerly, prepared very elaborate schemes for the causing of elections to be *free*; and, one would have expected it was not, certainly, too much to expect; that, when they saw, that there had been one free election in England, one *really* free election, they would have found some means or other of edging in a word in approbation of it, even if they had abstained from saying any thing upon the subject of that *advice* which the Baronet was so anxious to obtain. But, alas! they had, in the fatal interim, been in power themselves. They themselves had tasted of the honey; and, which was of more weight in the influencing of their conduct, they hoped, though in vain I believe, to taste of it again.—The newspapers, some of them, speak of Sir Francis Burdett's conduct as *malicious*, and take care, by hook or by crook, to bring in the name of *Despard*. Just as if the sense

and reason of the nation were to be silenced by the use of this name; just as if it had any thing to do with the High Bailiff of Westminster suing Sir Francis Burdett for the expenses of taking the election. And, as to *malice*, was there any malice in his asking the *advice* of the Honourable House? He did no more. If the House advised him to pay the demand; if they advised him to submit to be punished for having obeyed the king's command, in taking his seat, why there it was; he would have paid the money; for he made no *complaint*, and said that the payment was a matter of perfect indifference to him. I should suppose, that the Honourable House would have considered it as a compliment to its wisdom, to have its advice asked upon such a matter, particularly as Sir Francis stated, that it was purely from tenderness for the honour of the Honourable House, and from a fear of incurring their displeasure, that he had asked their advice. But, there are some men, whom nothing will please. Censure them, and they call you abusive; pay a compliment to their feelings, and they say you are malicious.

POPULATION.—In another part of this sheet will be found a Post Script from Mr. Arthur Young, from which I perceive, and with unfeigned sorrow, that that gentleman is very angry with me, who certainly never intended to give him any offence.—I said, in the passage, to which he alludes (see page 709 of this volume), that I knew of no return to the population act, which could enable Mr. Young to state what was the population of England and Wales in the year 1720. It appears, from what he now says, that there was a *calculation* made upon the subject, by a Mr. RICKMAN, who was appointed to collect and make an abstract of the parochial returns; and it is, it seems, upon this calculation that Mr. Young makes his statement. The act required, that the several rectors, vicars, curates, &c. &c. should make out returns, 1st, of the number of inhabited houses and families, and uninhabited houses; 2d, of the total number of persons, exclusive of soldiers and sailors; 3rd, of the number of persons employed in trade, manufactures, or handicraft; 4th, of the number of baptisms and burials, at stated periods, from 1700 to 1800; and 5th, of the number of marriages in each year, from 1754 downwards to 1800. From these returns Mr. Rickman made up what is called the Population abstract; but, the abstract contained the answers to the first, second, and third questions only. There has since, it appears, been something else made out by Mr. Rickman,

upon the answers to the 4th and 5th questions; but, I must see those answers before I can form any judgment as to the probability of Mr. Rickman's being able to make a calculation upon them. I should think, from what I have seen and what I have heard, that it is quite impossible to obtain, except in some cases, correct answers to the fourth and fifth questions; and, if there had not been some very great difficulty attending it, how comes it that Mr. Rickman did not include those answers in his general abstract? If the parish books had been kept in such a way as to enable the Rector, &c. to make out the answers *at all*, those answers could have been made out much sooner than the answers to the former questions. But, my opinion is, that the answers to the 4th and 5th questions could not be made out, except in the way of guess, for any period farther back than forty or fifty years. Then comes the *calculation*; and though the principle of that calculation may be fair enough, yet, when we consider, how those religious sects have gradually diminished, who neither buried nor baptised in the Church of England, it is evident that the materials for such a calculation must be very defective. In short, I look upon such a calculation to *prove* nothing, especially when I consider the motive by which the employers of Mr. Rickman were actuated in the whole of the undertaking.—My decayed towns and villages; my large churches and handfuls of parishioners; and my down-sides, once cultivated with such surprizing labour and pains, and now, to the amount of millions of acres, lying uncultivated; all these arguments, Mr. Young says, have been long ago refuted by him. I should, without the least affectation, be much obliged to him for a reference to the particular part of his useful works, where the refutation is to be found; for, at present, I am thoroughly convinced, that this country was once much more populous than it now is. How is it possible to account for the existence of a church capable of containing a thousand people, in a place where the habitations now consist of a farm house or two and a few miserable huts, scarcely fit for men to dwell in? How is it possible to account for this in any other way than that of a decrease in the population?—I still am of opinion, however, that the question of population had nothing at all to do with that of *corn and sugar*; for, if it did appear, that, in proportion to the population, more malt was made formerly than is now made, what would be the evident cause? why, that *wine* is now drunk even

by the farmers themselves; and that the labouring man, who used to drink beer, has now, by the excise-laws, been driven to the well or the pump. It is, in almost all cases, the *many* who make the consumption as well as the creation of things. To be sure we now see some huge breweries, which have arisen out of the Walpolian system (for ever accursed!); but we do not consider, that a *million* of little breweries have been annihilated. Now you will not find a man, who lives by his daily labour, brew his own beer; formerly it was as rare to meet with one who did not. This is the great cause of a falling off in the quantity of malt made in England. There is not so much beer drunk by those who formerly drank beer. That the population has been increasing since the Revolution is probable; the long and bloody struggles, and the uncertainty of property, from about 1645 to 1680, must have greatly diminished the population of the country; but, my arguments of the large churches, &c., apply to a former period, and were used merely for the purpose of shewing, that the land of England is capable of supporting a much greater number of persons than it now has to support.—A correspondent (I. T.), whose letter will be found in another part of this sheet, brings me back, for a moment to the corn and sugar question. I think I know the hand-writing; and, if I am right in that respect, I look upon this letter as no bad proof of my having, in my endeavours as to this matter, been successful; for, the writer tells me, that I have convinced *him*, and I know him to be a truly independent man; a man who has no particular interests at stake, on the one side or on the other; a man accustomed to reason accurately, and to decide with great deliberation and care; the man, of all men whom I know in the world, whose judgment I would wish, upon any question whatever, to have upon my side; because I know, that, to great talents and wisdom, he joins an impartiality which no consideration can warp.—I, as well as he, could have wished, and, indeed, now wish, to see the intended bill merely a bill of *permission*. Restrictions upon trade are, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, impolitic, and not unfrequently unjust; and, I am of opinion, that it would be much better for the West-India Planters now to open a competition to them, and leave their sugar (*unloaded with previous duties*) to vie with the barley. With great deference to I. T., I must, however, say, that I think it carrying the notion of an *ex post facto* law a little too far, to apply it to a case like this. *Particular interests must*

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be made to give way to the *general* good. There can be no doubt that the particular interests of the distillers would suffer from the stoppage of their trade, in times of scarcity; but, such a measure would certainly be proper, and could not, reasonably, be complained of as an *ex post facto* law.—There are, I hear, petitions coming forward in favour of the intended measure; so that the House will find the subject ready discussed to their hands. This premature discussion is, however, the work of the barley-growers. They began it, and they have, I think, deprived themselves of that chance of success, which want of time for thought would have given them. Nothing, surely, was ever more indecent than the opposition which they commenced. The report was not printed until ten days after they began to call meetings and to condemn the measure. It was, therefore, *impossible* for them to be acquainted with the evidence, upon which the committee had made its report to the House; and yet they, in terms the most unqualified, set up a clamorous condemnation.—There has been, I perceive, a meeting of *Yeomen* farmers, at Winchester, consisting, certainly, of very respectable men, as far as the list of names at the bottom of the advertisement, enables me to judge; but, it is with no small satisfaction that I understand, that Sir Henry Mildmay was not present. It is no derogation from his character to say, that I believe him to have spoken against the measure, without full consideration; and, I shall be very glad to see, that time has altered his opinion, and has induced him to retract an error, into which any man might have fallen. As to his *colleague*, what he may happen to do is, with me at least, a matter of very little importance.—The meeting at Winchester was someagely attended as to excite very little interest. It was, in all probability, suggested by some businessless attorney, on the preceding market-day, as the means of insuring to himself, for once in his life-time, a good hearty dinner of roast-beef and plumb-pudding, at which, in compensation for his vigils, he might half burst himself with the juice of the grape, in drinking success to the consumption of barley. Great care was taken (by officious and *faithful* brother Scut, I suppose) to mention the dinner in calling the meeting; and, as the most moving piece of eloquence, this mention was reserved for the close. The truth is, that this meeting, like most others of the kind, appears to have been a mere apology for a dinner; and, if I am reminded, that the gentlemen, attending it, are at all times

able to have a great market dinner, I answer, that though they, doubtless, are, quite able to bear the expense, yet, they are not always able to find out an excuse for it that will satisfy themselves, and, which is of infinitely greater importance, that will satisfy their wives, who are very much addicted to reckon such expenses as so much subtracted from those enjoyments, of which *they* are justly entitled to a share.—As a farmer's frolic, therefore; as a little truantship from the dominion of the petticoat, the thing was, perhaps, excuseable, and brother Scut might have merit in the invention; but, if he carried the jest so far as to patch up, from ten times borrowed resolutions, a manifesto against an intended act of parliament, then he exposed his clients to the contempt of their more sober and sensible neighbours.—Of this description are, I dare say, almost the whole of the meetings we have read of, in the several counties. It is the large farmers only who assemble; large farmers do not work themselves; they love a jovial dinner; they keep brave horses to ride; and a day of frolic beyond the animadversion of the petticoat, is a day snatched from fate. This is the light, in which I, were I a member of parliament, should view these manifestoes. I should trace them to their first causes; I should see the attorney, or his clerk, copying them from old newspapers; and, of course, should be very careful how I regarded them as containing the real sentiments of even the persons by whom they were subscribed.

MR. PALMER.—After much talking about, this gentleman's case is again before parliament; and it must give satisfaction to every lover of fair dealing to see that justice, or something like justice, is, at last, to be done him. The short view of his case is this:—He was the author of that excellent plan of conducting the post-office of the kingdom, which is admired by all those who have considered it, and the advantages of which to the nation have been immense, in all the ways, in which an establishment of this sort can be advantageous to a nation.—If his plan succeeded, he was to be remunerated accordingly, than which nothing could be more fair. The clear revenue of the post-office was, before, comparatively, a trifle. If it rose, in consequence of the adoption of his plan, to a certain amount, he was to receive a certain per centage upon that overplus. But, at the same time, it was agreed, that Mr. Palmer should be an officer in the post-office, under the postmaster general, and that he should assist in carrying his plan into effect; for the filling

of which office he was to receive a salary. —Thus he began with the public. He entered upon his office, and the post-office revenue speedily attained the amount which gave him a per centage. But, sometime previous to the year 1799, he was *dismissed* from his office, on account of alledged misbehaviour; and, upon demanding his per centage, was told, that he had failed in that part of his bargain, which obliged him to assist in carrying his plan into execution; that, therefore, the bargain became void; that he had no claim to the percentage; and that, of course, he had only to accept of what the minister (who had dismissed him) chose to give him. Such was the decision of Pitt; and I need hardly say, that it was also the decision of one of his Houses of Commons. —The claim has now been revived. Mr. George Rose is opposed to this intended *waste of the public money!* And he and his right trusty and well-beloved Mr. Charles Long (Mr. Thomas Steele is not in the House now, I believe,) reprobate the claim; insist, that the salary and percentage were to be inseparable; and, of course, that Mr. Palmer could claim no percentage, unless he kept his office. —I say that such was *not* the bargain; and the proof is this, that Mr. Palmer was certainly in his senses, and that no man in his senses would voluntarily have made a bargain, which could be binding only upon himself. He was to have a great reward for a great public service; but, as it was in the *absolute power* of the other contracting party to *dismiss him at any moment*, it is evident, that, if the claim to the percentage was to cease along with the possession of the office, he could not have a moment's security for his reward. It is an abuse of words to call such a thing a *bargain*; and though a sharp lawyer might get a man to set his hand to it, that must be a villainous court of equity, in which it would not be overset. —Mr. Palmer *might* misbehave himself in his office, though I do not believe he did, and I think his dismissal is no bad presumptive proof of it. But, we all know how many ways there are, in which a man may offend a minister or a minister's jackall; and we all know, that if such be the case, he is pretty sure to be dismissed from any office that he may hold, *during that minister's pleasure*. Is it, therefore, probable, that Mr. Palmer, or any other man with an understanding above that of an oyster or periwinkle, would have made the bargain here spoken of? If Pitt had said to him in plain terms: "You shall have so much money for your invention, *while* you continue in such an office; but, mark

me; *I will turn you out of that office whenever I please:*" if this had been said to Mr. Palmer; or, if he had thought that the agreement could possibly have been made to receive this construction, can any one imagine that he would have communicated his invention to the government? Can any one believe, that a man would have thus employed his own talents and merits for the purpose of making himself one of the vilest dependents that ever existed upon the face of the earth? —But, the House of Commons, in 1799, rejected this claim, and there is no *new evidence*, says Mr. Long, in support of it. Mr. Rose says, that the question was decided in the House, in 1799, by a majority of 112 to 28; and, that, if the House now grant the prayer of Mr. Palmer, it "*will shake its honour and character more than any thing within his recollection.*" Good God! Let the House look to it then; for but, it is useless to proceed: the reader's recollection will fill up the chasm. —This was Pitt's way. When once he had got the House to do any thing, he used to tell them that they were eternally blasted if they did not stick to it, and even follow it up. I well remember how he used to call for votes upon the sole ground of their having already voted in the same spirit; and to tell them, almost in so many words, that they were a parcel of inconsistent fellows if they boggled at it for a single moment. —But, Mr. Rose, this is *another* parliament. The walls are the same; the literal house is the same; but the figurative house is another, and I wish I could say a very different one. True, a House of Commons did reject the claim of Mr. Palmer; and a House of Commons did pass a bill of attainder against Russel and Sidney, but another House of Commons repealed that bill of attainder, and were not afraid of their honour and character being shaken by the act. —It is clear; it wants no proof, no evidence to support the fact, that Mr. Palmer never could mean to make his hoped-for and expected reward depend upon his continuance in office, or, in other words, upon the mere whim of the minister of the day, let him be who he might. Besides, what was he to be in office for? Why, to assist in carrying his plan into execution; to assist in making the plan succeed. Well, then, the plan *did* succeed; the public are, and long have been, in possession of its immense benefits; so that there appears to be not the shadow of an objection to the claim of the percentage, and this, as far as I understand, is all that is intended to be granted. —I wish the Pitts and the Longs and the Roses had been as

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stout in their resistance of other claims. There are £20,000 gone to Dr. Jenner, and for *what*, let the people of Ringwood say. There have been, I believe, a hundred thousand pounds granted to the negro civilizers of Sierra Leone; and, away goes the scheme in smoke. But here is a scheme which was sensible and practicable. It has been tried; it has succeeded: its benefits have been enjoyed for a series of years; they are still enjoyed, and will be enjoyed for ages to come. Here would be a fit object for national liberality; but, Mr. Palmer asks for none; he only asks for his own; he merely demands that which is unjustly detained from him; and, if he is to receive no redress from the parliament, from whom is he to receive it, and who will ever trust the nation again? It is odd enough, that, when sinecure places are the topic, the persons who oppose this claim are amongst the foremost to talk of the sacredness of national bargains. Never mind the *amount*, say they, the place has been granted, and the nation must abide by the grant. Tell them of the enormous amount of the Marquis of Buckingham's place: no matter, say they, he has the place, and he must receive the revenue of it, be it what it may. Two years of that place is worth all Mr. Palmer's claim for ten years. The fact is, I dare say, that they found Mr. Palmer what they call, in their Whitehall slang, an *intractable man*. The man had merit; he could not help knowing that; and he was incapable of truckling to pompous ignorance. This, I'll engage, was his only sin; but, it was a thumper; it was a sin never to be forgiven. It is from such causes that the public affairs are so frequently mismanaged. To be capable of managing them argues the possession of talents and spirit; and who, that possesses talents and spirit, will quietly submit to the control of that stupidity and arrogance, which will frequently bear sway where the qualifications for office are such as I need not describe.—Mr. Bankes, who, it appears, opposes this claim, did not, any more than Mr. Rose or Mr. Long or Mr. Sturges, oppose the vote of 40,000*l.* to pay the debts of Pitt. Nay, *no one* opposed it, though, if Sir Francis Burdett had been in the House, I trust, he would have opposed it. Was that forty thousand pounds as well merited as the 60,000*l.* now to be paid to Mr. Palmer? There is not a just man in the kingdom but will answer, NO. This, Mr. Bankes calls an *extravagant* demand; but, it is not the mere amount of any demand that makes it extravagant. The demand of a guinea for a pound of beef is

more extravagant than the demand of twenty guineas for the half of an ox. Mr. Palmer asks for no more than his due, agreeably to the undenied terms of what he says is a contract. Disprove the contract, and he is entitled to nothing; but, if the contract be recognised, the demand cannot be extravagant. There is, too, in the present case, this peculiar circumstance, that you acknowledge to have *gained* by the contract; and, that it is only *his share of the gains* that Mr. Palmer demands. Had the nation *lost* by the contract; or, had the gain been matter of doubt, there might have been some room for shuffle. It would have been disgraceful, indeed; it would have been abhorrent from the character of Englishmen, amongst whom the sacredness of pecuniary engagements is inculcated in the common and emphatical phrase: "a bargain is a bargain." Still, however, there would have been room for some men to shuffle; but, in the present case, I am almost ready to say, that I would defy an American to find out a pretext for shuffling.

Botley, 19th May, 1808.

POSTSCRIPT FROM MR. A. YOUNG

SIR.—In your observations on Mr. Coke's speech to the Norfolk meeting you have this passage.—"Where did Mr. Young learn that the number was 5,565,000 in 1720? Not "by the return to the act," or, at least, I never saw or heard of such return I am of opinion, that he has now spoken from no better authority than that of Gregory King, who, indeed was so minute and accurate a gentleman that he included in his estimate the number of rabbits in England and "Wales."—Now, Mr. Cobbett, what right could you have to accuse me of so offensive a want of respect to the committee as to state a matter of information as derived from specific authority, which, so far from having foundation, was built only on the vague guesses of a political speculator? Sir, I did not merit this injurious supposition. You have no occasion to go back to Gregory King, because, if you will put on your spectacles when you next examine the population report on the return to the 41st of the King, you will find a table of progressive state of population from 1700 to 1801. But if you knew of this document and rejected it, I leave you to settle that matter with Mr. Rickman; I certainly accept his authority in decided preference to your cases to prove our depopulation; your ruined towns—your large churches—your marks of the plough—your down sides

and all your other proofs of decline in numbers (most of which were urged by Dr Price and Mr. Jackson and were refuted by me more than thirty years ago; the returns to the population act have sufficiently proved who was right) these methods of depressing a fair adversary, (than whom no man more admires your talents) rarely answer longer than for a moment;—the triumph is short;—and you will certainly admit that I did not produce to the committee the authority of a writer who mistook rabbits for women. Although you are ready to declare that the singular fact I produced has nothing to do with the main question, you must permit me to think very differently. It ought to convince the legislature that barley is the last object upon which to make *experiments*; that depressing consumption is not the way to encourage production; these truths, so obvious to plain understandings, are denied, Sir, by the evident tendency of all you have written on this business of the distillery. I am, &c.—ARTHUR YOUNG.

CORN AGAINST SUGAR.

SIR,—I am a constant reader of your excellent Political Register, and a great admirer of the powerful reasons, and your clear and strong manner of stating them, with which you generally support your opinions; and, for the most part, I accede to those opinions. And I have accordingly had great pleasure in reading your reflections on the measure now in parliament, for permitting the sugar-planters of our West India islands to distil, for the use of the inhabitants of Great Britain, the great quantities of sugar they have lately been imported into England, and which they cannot otherwise dispose of to their advantage. Your reasonings upon this subject convinced me that this permission ought to be granted to them; but they did not thoroughly convince me that the bill that is now in parliament, ought, in its present form, to pass; because, I understand that this bill does not only grant a *permission* to the sugar planters to distill their sugars, but *prohibits* the growers of barley from distilling their corn: and this I thought rather hard upon them, as it was depriving them by an *ex post facto* law (excuse the expression borrowed from the Latin language, as I don't know how so readily to express the matter in plain English,) of the liberty of employing their corn in the manner in which they might have intended to employ it when they sowed it in their fields. In general I have an aversion to restrictions and prohibitions; and especially to such as are unexpected and contrary to the views that the persons who are

the objects of them, might justly and reasonably have entertained with respect to the use of their property, as this prohibition to the corn growers seemed to be. And I somewhat wondered that you had not, in your former discussions of this subject, expressed your disapprobation of this prohibition. But, now I perceive, by your yesterday's Register, that you agree with me in this sentiment; and, therefore, I now earnestly and confidently hope, that your arguments will have the effect of procuring success to the present bill for the relief of the poor sugar planters, without that prohibitory clause against the corn growers. For the planters are really in great distress, and justly entitled to the attention and compassion of government, by all practicable and reasonable methods; and are, as you rightly observe, the subjects of the crown as much as the inhabitants and natives of Great Britain itself. And the arguments of Mr. Arthur Young and Mr. Wakefield, against the intended permission to the sugar planters, when unaccompanied with the prohibition to the corn growers, appear to me to have been thoroughly refuted and overthrown by the answers you have given them.—I remain your obedient servant,—I. T.—*May 15, 1808.*

CORN AGAINST SUGAR.

SIR,—I have read with much pleasure, your very excellent address to the Freeholders of Hampshire, and I think the country highly indebted to you, for the clear elucidation of the subject therein given. There is, however, one part of your statement (in which Mr. Wakefield appears to acquiesce) not quite correct. You assume that the corn used in the distilleries is, *as food* “thrown away.” This is not the fact, for of the 470,000 qrs. of grain used (as the Report of the Committee states) in the British distilleries, there remain after the extract is made 300,000 qrs. of grains. There is also a very considerable quantity of wash left after the spirit is drawn from the extract of the corn. These grains and wash are used in the feeding of cattle, which must otherwise be fattened on corn. This statement however, so far as it goes diminishes the value of the distilleries as a granary. For if grain be prohibited in the manufacture of spirits, there must still be a quantity of corn used either for feeding cattle or making bread to supply that deficiency of food occasioned by the want of the refuse of the corn distilleries. In estimating the value of three quarters of grains (the refuse after the extract is made), to be equal in the production of food to one quarter of barley, I think I am rather under

the mark. in case the use sugar barley would food which leries.—fore so get to this me the count to have w tee, and been print which the ries is rec ly consid port and and if an on the o Mr. Wak agricult use of c not only the mini all in the Mr. You “ proba “ with “ grain “ of a s “ vest “ with the who you hav of last country crop, an would equal to Wakefi importa 1,447, “ ceiv “ equa “ in th “ ing “ agai “ kno “ hav “ you “ be “ A. “ the “ a s “ yea “ the Now, from in the whole from addit

the mark. Upon this supposition, however, in case the distilleries should be compelled to use sugar instead of corn, 100,000 qrs. of barley would be required for producing that food which is now supplied from the distilleries.—I must say, Mr. Cobbett, that before so general and determined an opposition to this measure had been raised throughout the country, it would have been but decent to have waited till the report of the committee, and the evidence given before it, had been printed, in order that the principles, on which the prohibition of corn in the distilleries is recommended, might have been calmly considered and fairly discussed. The report and the appendix are now before me, and if any reliance whatever is to be placed on the opinion of Mr. Arthur Young and Mr. Wakefield (the great champions of the agricultural interest), the prohibition of the use of corn in the distilleries is a measure not only fit and proper in itself, but such as the ministers of the country are bound to do all in their power to carry into effect. On Mr. Young being asked. "Q. Under the probable circumstances of the country with respect to the supply of foreign grain, can we look forward to the effects of a short crop or mildew, or a wet harvest without apprehension? A. Not without great apprehension." In fact, the whole tenor of his answers, upon which you have so ably commented in the Register of last week, proves the great distress this country would suffer in the event of a short crop, and even with a plentiful harvest there would be a deficiency in the usual supply equal to the amount of the importation. Mr. Wakefield after stating the average annual importation from 1800 to 1806, to be 1,447,500 qrs., was asked, "Do you conceive that we are likely to have a supply equal to the average of the last five years, in the present state of Europe? A. Knowing the ports of the Baltic to be shut against us, I should say, certainly not. I know that the importations from America have been very trifling indeed. Q. Must you not then apprehend that there will be a great scarcity of grain in the market? A. The present prices of wheat best speak the contrary fact at this moment: but if a short harvest was to take place next year, the coming-in year, I should think the country in an alarming state indeed." Now, Sir, having before us this evidence from two of the best practical agriculturists in the country, shut out as we are from the whole continent of Europe, and excluded from all commerce with America, having in addition to all this, our own West India co-

lonies to supply from the growth of this country, can any unbiassed man hesitate for one moment, as to the propriety of bringing into consumption as food 370,000 qrs. of grain, (for I take it for granted that 100,000 qrs. would be still required for feeding cattle) especially, too, when it is recollected that the king in council will be enabled to put an end to the prohibition of the distilleries whenever the interests of the farmer shall require it? It appears to me, that very serious consequences may be the result of our not availing ourselves of every mean of increasing the food to be used in this country; and, I cannot but hope that the patriotism of the landed interest, will induce it to withdraw its opposition to a measure so just in itself, and, under the present political circumstances of Europe, so necessary to our welfare.—I am, &c.—Z.—May 12, 1808.

CROWN LANDS.

SIR,—The present disposal of the "crown lands," would certainly be worth investigation, and I much wish that the public attention should be directed to the subject.—I am surrounded by a valuable portion of them, which have been leased for so many years back to the representatives of an opulent family in the neighbourhood, as to be considered at this day a part of their own property. This family, of course, is enabled to return the members; for the crown lands and houses are judiciously stocked at an under rent with free and independent electors, as I understand they usually are in cities by the leading men.—I sincerely hope that an immediate resumption of these grants may be made. First, that the benevolence of the king, which might be directed to more deserving objects, should not be intercepted and turned to unconstitutional purposes by the middlemen. Or, secondly, that in these times of difficulty, the government should draw the full value of its estates, now by no means the case, and which can only be fairly ascertained by a public auction. And, finally, because, by the destruction of this source of undue influence, the first stone would be thrown into the chasm which yawns between the honest voter, and the independent candidate.—UTOPIAN.—May 12, 1808.

LIVERPOOL PETITION.

DISTILLATION FROM SUGAR.—To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled, the humble Petition of the Gentlemen, Clergy, Merchants,

and other Inhabitants of the Town of Liverpool:

Sheweth, That this town essentially depends for the supply of bread to its numerous inhabitants, and a large and populous district in the interior of the county of Lancaster upon importations of corn and flour from other parts, and that a large proportion of such supply has heretofore been derived from foreign countries.—That of late, in consequence of the unhappy situation of the Continent of Europe, and the embargo which has taken place in the United States of America, the importation of foreign corn and flour has ceased, and the prices of these articles have advanced considerably, and are still advancing, while at the same time from the stagnation of trade, and the consequent want of employment and depreciation of wages, the labouring classes of the people are become less able to purchase those necessities of life at a high rate, or even more reasonable rates, as fully appears by the report lately made of evidence taken before a committee of your honourable house, ordered to be printed on the 12th of April last, on the petition of certain cotton manufacturers and journeymen cotton weavers living in this county.—That from the united operation of these circumstances your petitioners have been and continue apprehensive of much distress amongst the poor in this populous town and county; and it was with peculiar satisfaction that they observed, in a late report of a committee of your honourable house, the recommendation of what your petitioners humbly deem a wise measure of precaution loudly called for by the existing situation of the country; nameiy, the suspension of the use of grain in the distilleries of the kingdom, and the restriction of them to the use of sugar for a limited period.—That in proportion to the satisfaction of your petitioners in so well-timed a recommendation, is their regret in perceiving that meetings have been held in some parts of the country for the purpose of obtaining petitions to your honourable house, against the measure in question, as calculated to injure the farmers and discourage agriculture.—That your petitioners humbly contend that this measure cannot produce those effects, as it appears by the report of your committee, that on an average of the last five years the importation of foreign corn into Great Britain, has not been less than seven hundred and seventy thousand quarters per annum, which must of course have found a consumption, but which can no longer be imported; while the quantity of corn used in the distilleries of the United Kingdom does not ex-

ceed seven hundred and eighty thousand quarters, and therefore the corn to be excluded from the distilleries by the proposed measure, supposing it to extend to Ireland as well as Great Britain, will only supply the place of the quantity hitherto imported from foreign parts.—That in addition to this usual foreign supply (of which a large proportion has been received at Liverpool), there has been imported into this place from Ireland, on an average of the last five years, two hundred and forty two thousand five hundred and twenty-five quarters of corn, flour, and oatmeal, per annum; that during the period now past of the present year, this usual supply has been greatly diminished, and in place of a continuance thereof, at this time, orders for the purchase of considerable quantities of wheat and oats have been received by merchants in Liverpool, from millers and others in Ireland, at unlimited prices, to be shipped from hence for the supply of districts in that part of the United Kingdom, where scarcity appears to be apprehended.—

—That large supplies of corn are annually received at Liverpool from Scotland, that these supplies during the present year have been much less than usual, owing to the deficiency of the last crop in several quarters in that part of the United Kingdom, all which tends to enhance still more the price of bread here, already too high for the labouring poor generally to afford, and particularly the manufacturing poor, from the present want of employment, and consequent depreciation of wages.—That if any insuperable obstacles should prevent this restriction from being extended to Ireland, it appears there would then be a deficiency of three hundred thousand quarters of foreign supply, to be provided for, if possible, by an extended cultivation of the soil of the United Kingdom, in order to meet the usual consumption of the country, without taking into the account the extraordinary supplies of corn, flour, and bread, which, in the present situation of affairs must inevitably be wanted by the British West India Colonies from the United Kingdom, as well as that our allies the Swedes, being deprived of their usual supply of bread corn from the opposite shores of the Baltic, and their own growth being generally inadequate to their ordinary consumption, may at this time be compelled to resort to this country for supplies of barley, which when mixed with rye is, as your petitioners are informed, used for bread in times of scarcity in Sweden.—That in the opinion of your petitioners, the prices of corn are likely to continue high, though they trust that the adoption of this

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measure will prevent them from becoming exorbitant. That the advantage of exorbitant prices even to the farmers is very questionable, experience having shewn that they terminate eventually in uncommon depreciation, while, in the meantime, the evils that ensue to the public at large are unquestionably great; and your petitioners feel assured that your honourable house will deem the good of the whole to be preferred to a doubtful interest of one class of the people, however numerous and respectable; a class, moreover, which being protected, by a special act of the legislature, from the injurious effects of an excessive depreciation of the prices of corn in times of plenty, by bounties on its exportation, payable out of the public revenue, ought, at other times, in fairness and justice, to submit cheerfully to such measures as may be necessary to guard the public against the contrary extreme of exorbitant prices, particularly in the present peculiar situation of the country, and unprecedented state of the continent of Europe.

—That with regard to the local interests of any particular districts in which barley may be chiefly cultivated, your petitioners humbly conceive they have a still less claim to be put into competition with a measure of general advantage; but your petitioners are of opinion, that even the local interests of the barley counties are now likely to be materially affected by the proposed measure, for though barley is the grain chiefly used in the English distilleries, and though it appears there are some lands in this kingdom where no substitute for the crops of that grain can be resorted to without injury to the farmer; yet, on the other hand, it appears there are also lands on which barley is grown where oats would prove an advantageous substitute; and when your petitioners consider, that, of the quantity of barley annually produced in England, only one sixteenth part, or thereabouts, has been consumed in the distilleries, they cannot doubt that such a change of culture might take place as would prevent barley from being reduced below its proportionable price compared with other grain, or if it should for a time be somewhat lower than its just proportion, it would soon, in the opinion of your petitioners, find a more extended consumption as bread corn, the effect of which must inevitably be to raise it to its natural level; in confirmation of which, your petitioners are enabled to state to your honourable house, that of late, in consequence of the advance in wheat and oats, as well as the reduction of wages, the lower classes in this county have begun to

have recourse to barley bread, which they are not accustomed to use except in times of scarcity and comparative dearth of other sorts of grain.—That your petitioners conceive that the confining of the operation of the measure in question to a single year, with a power vested in his majesty in council to put an end to it within that period, if necessary, would be so guarded a proceeding, as under all the circumstances of the case, cannot reasonably excite in the minds of those concerned the least feeling of alarm or apprehension.—That although your petitioners are anxious to recommend the proposed measure to your honourable house, on grounds of general benefit, without reference to any partial interests, yet they cannot be insensible of its tendency to afford relief to the West India colonies, in their present distressed situation, which have been shewn to have peculiar claims on the consideration of the legislature, and which, in the apprehension of your petitioners, affords a strong additional argument in favour of this measure, more especially as the preservation of the colonies from the ruin which threatens them, is confessedly an object of the first national importance, as it appears the article of sugar alone pays an annual duty of above three millions to the country, that the manufactured goods exported annually to these colonies have exceeded six millions in value, and that this trade is one of the principal remaining nurseries for our seamen, and of employment for our shipping.—Your petitioners therefore pray that your honourable house will pass an act to suspend the use of grain in the distilleries of Great Britain and Ireland, and to confine them to the use of sugar for one year from the 1st day of July next, subject to a discretionary power to be vested in the king in council, upon a sufficient notice, to do away the suspension, and allow the distilleries to carry on their trade in the accustomed manner.—And your petitioners will ever pray, &c.

OFFICIAL PAPERS.

Report from Lieut. Col. Robertson, Commandant of Scylla Castle,——(Concluded from page 800.)

The fire from the breaching batteries had been variously directed till the evening of the 16th, when they bent their undivided fury against the left bastion with such success, that the breach would probably have been practicable by the following evening. It was under these circumstances that I received your orders to evacuate the castle, and have the great satis-

faction of reporting, that we accomplished this yesterday morning, in full view of the enemy, and without leaving an individual behind. The approach of the boats from Faro gave the French full intimation of our design, but the tempestuous state of the weather obliged us to seize the short opportunity of an hour's lull.—Every battery poured its utmost fire upon the castle, and subsequently upon the boats; while infantry with field pieces tried the breach on either side.—The garrison was drawn off in succession, and the embarkation effected with the greatest order, notwithstanding the tremendous fire of grape, shells, &c. Our loss in the operation was small; and before we were a musket-shot distant, the French were in the fort.—The masterly arrangement of the transport boats and man of war launchers upon this occasion, does high honour to Capt. Trollope, of his majesty's ship *Electra*, who personally superintended this service; and the conduct of the officers and men under him was marked with all the coolness and dexterity of British seamen. I regret to add, that one of them was killed in the operation, and ten wounded, some of them dangerously. The uniform good conduct of the garrison which I have had the good fortune to command, demands my warmest gratitude; and their intrepid spirit during the siege is hardly more commendable than the zeal with which they went through the fatigues that preceded it.—The detachment of the Royal Artillery was highly conspicuous; the excellence of their gunnery was proved by the severe losses which the enemy has sustained; and I cannot too strongly express my sense of the skill and indefatigable zeal which Lieut. Dunn has displayed throughout the siege.—I feel highly indebted to the exertions of Capt. Cruikshanks of the 62d, Jordan of the 27th, and Pringle of the 21st, as well as to the officers and men under them.—From Lieut. Dickons, of the engineers, I received every assistance; and my adjutant, Lieut. Hadfield, of the 35th, has been throughout indefatigably zealous.—I cannot, conclude, Sir, without expressing my particular thanks to Capt. Nicholas, Assistant Quarter-Master General, whose abilities and activity rendered him eminently useful. And I have the satisfaction of reflecting, that the support I have received from all ranks has enabled me to sell Scylla dear; and that General Rgnier has obtained possession of this little heap of ruins with the loss of several hundreds of his best troops.—The return of our killed and wounded is annexed. We have

lost some gallant men; but considering the weight of the enemy's fire, the number is by no means great.—I have the honour to be, &c.—G. D. ROBERTSON, Lieut. Colonel. Commandant Scylla Castle.

To Maj. Gen. Sherbrooke, commanding his British Majesty's troops in Sicily.

Return of the killed and wounded of the detachments forming the British garrison of the Castle of Scylla, in Calabria, from the 4th to the 17th of Feb. 1808; viz.—Royal Artillery, 3 gunners killed; 1 bombardier, 8 gunners wounded.—27th Reg. 1st bat. 3 rank and file killed, 14 rank and file wounded.—68th Reg. 3 rank and file killed, 6 rank and file wounded.—62d Reg. 2 rank and file killed, 2 rank and file wounded.—Total, 3 gunners, 8 rank and file killed; 1 bombardier, 8 gunners, 22 rank and file wounded.

(Signed) J. CAMPBELL, Brig. Gen. Adjutant-General.

RUSSIA.—*Declaration published at St. Petersburg, March 16, 1808, in consequence of the Arrest of the Russian Ambassador at Stockholm.*

The emperor has informed all the cabinets of Europe and his own subjects of his constant endeavours to enforce his rights grounded on subsisting treaties with Sweden, and to obtain by virtue thereof the co-operation of his Swedish majesty against England. After having pursued these measures for several months, his imperial majesty was concerned to find that while he was endeavouring to preserve a good understanding between Russia and Sweden the latter preferred the friendship of England his enemy.—His imperial majesty has not concealed from the king of Sweden, or all Europe, that the welfare of his people required of him to employ all the means which Providence has bestowed on him for the safety and welfare of his empire.—Faithful to his system of moderation, his majesty declared to the king of Sweden his readiness to convert the step which he had reluctantly taken, into a mere measure of prudence, if the king would immediately, and without delay, perform his engagements, and co-operate with him and the king of Denmark to shut the Baltic against the English fleets.—The silence observed by the king of Sweden, the accounts given in public papers of the conclusion of a treaty, by which subsidies, a fleet, and part of the land forces of Great Britain were placed at the disposal of that monarch; in short every thing bespoke the real sentiments of that prince with regard to Russia; every thing clearly shewed, that his imperial majesty

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could not expect any favourable change of the sentiments of the king of Sweden, and that it was time for his imperial majesty to secure his subjects against the evils which had been secretly planned against them. His majesty was accordingly compelled to alter the character of his measure.—He has received intelligence that his ambassador in Stockholm on the 20th of February (3 March) was put in a state of arrest by the king's order, that all the persons belonging to the Russian embassy were also confined in one house, by his command, that the said monarch had even proceeded so far as to order all the papers and letters of the embassy to be taken under seal, and the whole mission to be guarded by the military; his majesty has therefore to complain of an act of violence committed against his prerogative and the dignity of his crown, which concerns all other powers as well as himself. The diplomatic body, resident in Stockholm, was so perfectly sensible of the truth of this assertion, that it immediately protested against an act of violence unprecedented in Europe, with the exception of Turkey.—The emperor might use reprisals, but he has preferred to direct his ministers to increase the attention which they have always paid to the Swedish ambassador who is still in Petersburg, and to take care, that, should he chuse to take his departure from hence, he may not experience any difficulty or unpleasant proceedings on his journey.—His imperial majesty hereby informs all European powers, that, from this moment, he considers the former Swedish Finland, which his troops have not been able to subdue, but in consequence of several actions, as a province conquered by his arms, and that he incorporates it for ever with his empire. His majesty expects that Providence will continue to bless his arms in this war, and assist him to remove the evil from the frontier of his empire, to which the enemies of Russia endeavour to expose him.

PORTUGAL.—*Proclamation by General Junot. Dated April 5, 1808.*

The general in chief of the army of Portugal, understanding that many soldiers and inhabitants of the kingdom of Portugal have suffered themselves to be deluded by false proclamations, published by the English, to procure soldiers, of which the British squadron is so much in need, and wishing to prevent the misery of those who may hereafter become the victims of the perfidious insinuations of the commanders of that squadron, it is decreed:—1. That all communication between the kingdom of Portugal and the ves-

sels belonging to the English squadron, be expressly prohibited: and that should any vessel or boat, of any description, approach the coast throughout all Portugal, under any pretext whatever, (even with a flag of truce,) it is ordered, that all officers commanding batteries or forts, do fire on them; any officer who shall suffer a vessel or boat to approach the shore, shall be tried by a court martial and broke.—II. Any individual detected in endeavouring to get on board an English vessel under any pretext whatever, shall be brought before a military committee, and condemned to six months imprisonment, or to death, according to the case.—III. Any master or owner of a boat, or other individual, who shall be proved to have facilitated the passage of any person to the English squadron, shall be brought before a military committee, and tried as an accomplice with the enemy, and as an instigator and spy, and be punished with death.—IV. Any individual, convicted of exciting the soldiers of the French and Portuguese army to desertion to any power whatever, will be punished by death as a crimp traitor.—V. Any person who shall give information of a master of a boat having conducted any one to the English squadron, or any person using endeavours to get there, through the intervention of a crimp or spy, on the fact being proved, shall receive as a reward the boat and one hundred cruzados for any individual, or two hundred for a crimp or spy.—VI. All the property of those who have quitted Portugal up to this moment, and are gone off to the enemy's squadron, shall be sequestered, if they do not return before the 20th instant. The magistrates in each department will examine the respective inhabitants, and take a list of those persons who have fled, and transmit the same to the intendant general of the police.—VII. The French military penal code from this day will be put in execution against the Portuguese army, agreeable to which every deserter on being arrested will be punished with death.—VIII. The secretary of state, the commanders of the French, Spanish, and Portuguese armies, all magistrates and justices of every description, are charged with the execution of this decree, throughout the kingdom, and to make the same generally known; any boats found without a copy of this edict, shall be seized and sold for the benefit of the captor. (Signed)—JUNOT.

SWEDEN.—*The King of Sweden's Proclamation on the Rupture of the Intercourse with Prussia. Dated Stockholm Castle, April 5, 1808.*

We, Gustavus Adolphus, by the grace of God, King of Sweden, of the Goths and Vandals, &c. unto all our true and loyal subjects, greeting:—We herewith graciously make known to you, that his majesty, the king of Prussia, has declared to us that all kind of intercourse between his dominions and Sweden is suspended, and that in consequence thereof all trade and navigation to Swedish ports is prohibited under severe penalties; and that farther, all Prussian harbours are shut up against all Swedish ships.—This proceeding has not by any means been occasioned on our part; the said government, reduced by French tyranny, affords a fresh proof of the oppression to which all states must submit, that entertain any connection with the French government. An unfortunate lassitude, which prevented Prussia from resisting in due time, has brought her to the distressed situation in which she is now placed—groaning under the domination of France, which still occupies a considerable part of the remains of that monarchy with a numerous army, notwithstanding the conclusion of peace. We commend you all and severally to the merciful protection of Almighty God.—GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS.

Proclamation of General Armfeldt on entering Norway.

• Inhabitants of Norway,—The Danish government has declared war against Sweden without any cause or provocation on her part, and has increased the calamities which affected the North, and spontaneously submitted to a foreign yoke. The Swedish troops therefore enter your country according to the laws of war, and in order to prevent hostilities from being committed on their own country. But the laws of war are carried into execution only by soldiers. The principal inhabitants of the towns and country, if they excite no disturbances, shall enjoy tranquillity and protection.—The Swedish soldier, celebrated for order and discipline, respects the personal safety and property of the unarmed; and, should Providence bless his majesty's arms, the army under my command, so far from proving hurtful to your different trades, shall open your ports to commerce and importation, quicken your industry, and secure in the North an asylum for loyalty and honour.—AUGUSTUS MAURICE ARMFELDT.

DUTCH BUDGET.—A Committee of the Council of State, consisting of M. M. Van Leyden, Van Westharendrecht Cuypus, and Heinlopen, brought on the 9th instant, to the Legislative Body, the following Message, relating to the Finances, and in the Sitting of yesterday the Project of a Decree, proposed in the Message, was adopted.—Dated, Utrecht, March 30.

The King to the Legislative Body;—
“Gentlemen;—We have charged a committee of our council of state to present to you a projet of a law relative to the finances of this year.—At the commencement of your present session, we expressed on our part a strong desire to adopt a definitive and permanent system with respect to the finances, but since the 28th of November, affairs have not been ameliorated, and we have been under the indispensable necessity of provisionally shutting our ports. This extreme and painful measure ought to ensure to us compensation, to which we have so much title, and affords an irrefragable proof of the sincerity and constancy of our efforts in the common cause. Thus we must postpone all idea of a definitive and permanent system until a maritime peace, when alone it will be possible to reduce our expenditure to the amount of our revenue.”—It then goes on to state, that the expenditure for 1807 had been 78,000,000 florins, and the revenues only 55,000,000, leaving a deficit of 23,000,000, exclusive of previous arrears. To meet these a loan of 40,000,000 had been negotiated, which produced 38,000,000; the 15,000,000, after providing for the deficit, was applied to the payment of arrears. The estimate of expenditure for 1808 is 74,000,000, whilst the revenue is not estimated to produce more than 50,000,000.—It is said in this part of the Message, “We cannot dispense with maintaining in a good state the squadrons of the Texel and the Meuse. We announce with pleasure to the Legislative Body, that as the price of our efforts France has expressly engaged to procure the restoration of our colonies, and particularly those of Guiana.”—To meet the deficit of the present year a sort of forced assessment is proposed, which was adopted by the Legislative Body, by which those paying it are to become creditors of the state to the amount required. This is resorted to instead of a loan.